it, or rather some "psychic force" related to it, "`an invisible, supersensuous' something -- a dynamical agent -- a material force ... can, independent of sensation or automatic life, cause the excitation of nervous or muscular molecules, as efficiently and truly as is done by ab extra agency" (212). Its pervasive power would explain why "all brain substance is not necessary to physical nor mental life, and ... the localization of psychical power is not borne out by experiment or pathology" (220). The particular experiments Clark has in mind, he insists in this paper originally delivered on May 10, 1878, before the American Association of Medical Superintendents of Asylums for the Insante at Washington, D.C., are what he has derived from "asylum experience" (225). The "psychic force" helps explain, among other phenomena of "asylum life," why in cases of paresis "the organ, diseased as it is, can do its work healthily at one time and at another morbidly, yet under the same conditions in both cases" (226). This "psychic force" enables Clark to organize virtually all physical and physiological phenomena according to some evolutionary principle, from electricity, thorugh "vitalism" to "psychism" (192).

Clark's belief in dualistic and evolutionary forces of mind and matter is coloured by his experiences as Superintendent of the Toronto Asylum, where "matter" gets the upper hand, and evolution tends to become devolution -- or disintegration. Clark finds himself less preoccupied with heroically combating epidemic pestilence than with painfully redressing modern-day problems of negative heredity and worry.[liii] A phrase Clark wrote in his report for 1890 makes a good epigraph for his period as superintendent, as attention is increasingly paid to details and the asylum finally achieves "a personality of its own" (1890, 41). For him the Asylum is an "intricate organization" or perhaps organism which "reflects," as he puts it, both "the necessities of the various periods of its existence" and "the `personal equation'" of its administrators. It seems characteristic of Clark's abstract and paradigmatic mode of thought that he sees the Asylum itself as the ongoing product of a harsh dialectical process, the rather unsatisfactory synthesis of diametrically opposed forces of accommodation and idealism.

The institution he inherited in 1875 must have amounted to a considerable worry.[liv] While in his reports he glances at some of his predecessor's old obsessions, like masturbation (for example in his "inaugural report" of 1876),